

# Handy Hints with Dennis Figg

## CHOOSING A TENT

**QUALITY:** Don't skimp! You really do get what you pay for...and in bad weather, a properly erected tarp is better than a cheap tent.



**SIZE:** You need a flat spot to erect a tent and since there are more small flat spots than large ones, a smaller tent makes sense. However, if the weather turns bad, you'll all be spending a lot of time in the tent, so make sure it's big enough to accommodate everyone with whom you expect to be camping.

**WEIGHT:** For backpacking, limit the tent to 4 or 5 pounds (2 person tent). If you're car camping, you can choose a heavier and more spacious model.



**STYLE:** Freestanding tents can be pitched virtually anywhere, can easily be moved without taking it down, and are easier to clean. They don't have to be staked, but always do it anyway, just in case of strong wind during the night.

**FEATURES:** See the tent fully pitched before you buy. Does the rain fly adequately protect the tent interior? Look for a bathtub seam (where the bottom meets the sides a few inches above the ground)...it's more water resistant. Consider wind: three crisscrossing tent poles handle wind better than two. Look for factory seam-sealing...it's the most effective kind.

## USING A TENT

- Practice pitching your tent before going on a trip.
- Seam seal your tent before using it. It takes about an hour but is essential protection against stormy nights.
- Use a ground cloth under your tent to protect the bottom from rocks and roots. However, be sure the ground cloth is tucked UNDER the edges of the tent...exposed edges will collect water, which will leak into the tent.
- Avoid leaving the tent up in direct sunlight, which also weakens the fabric and waterproofing.
- Don't wear boots or shoes inside the tent...mud & dirt abrade the fabric.
- NEVER cook inside a tent...DON'T use candles inside the tent.
- Shake a wet tent before packing it away. A completely wet tent weighs more. If possible, air it out during the day so it's dry when you pack it.
- Don't fold the tent...stuff it into the cover. If you fold the tent along the same creases, the coating and fabric will weaken in those areas.
- Never store a tent without airing it dry. Do this even if you thought it was dry when you packed it away on the last day of your trip.



## CHOOSING A SLEEPING BAG

**FIT:** Can you turn around in it? Is there room around your chest & shoulders? Can you easily reach zipper pulls & toggles? Is there extra room around your feet?

**TEMPERATURE RATING:** There is no industry standard, but manufacturers are consistent within their own line of products. Buy a bag rated to 10 degrees below the temperatures you expect to encounter.

**MATERIAL:** Use a down bag in dry cold and a synthetic in wet conditions. Goose down is still the best insulator and compresses into a smaller bundle for easier packing BUT is useless (and heavy!) when it gets wet.



**STYLE:** Mummy bags are warmer, and the tighter the fit, the warmer it will feel. But if you're a little claustrophobic, choose the looser, more comfortable rectangular bag.

**FEATURES:** Look for an insulated panel along the length of the zipper; it prevents cold air leakage around the zipper. In a down bag, look for square-box baffles...they provide maximum loft and keep the down from shifting. Baffles are unnecessary in synthetic bags.

